

LIMERICK SOCIALIST

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**THE
VOICE
OF THE
WORKER**

That which is good for the working class I esteem patriotic . . . James Connolly

'THE PARISH PUMP'



KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY



STEVE COUGHLAN

MATT TALBOT SAINT OR SCAB?



Prayer for the
Canonization
of
Matthew Talbot

☩ Jesus, true friend of the humble worker, Thou hast given us in Thy servant, Matthew, a wonderful example of victory over vice, a model of penance and of love for Thy Holy Eucharist, grant we beseech Thee, that we Thy servants may overcome all our wicked passions and sanctify our lives with penance and love like his.

And if it be in accordance with Thy adorable designs that Thy pious servant should be glorified by the Church, deign to manifest by Thy heavenly favours the powers he enjoys in Thy sight, Who livest and reignest for ever and ever. Amen.

100 days' Indulgence each time.

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JUST THE DRILL FOR CHRISTMAS

BY DERMOT MCEVOY

A regular beef of mine round Christmas time is this Peace-on-earth-goodwill-to-men business. It is the most arrant nonsense; it is an ethic and attitude not expected of anyone. Next time you meet your friendly local padre from St. Alphonsus's ask him what does *et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis* means and he will tell you, "and on earth peace to men of goodwill". Men of goodwill, an entirely different kettle of fish. Not goodwill-to-men.

You are not, for instance expected to show goodwill to publichouse bombers irrespective of the Christian denomination to which they are attached or, rather, to which they attach themselves. Least of all to the Ulster Protestant Action Group whose new technology would make even Torquemada wince. I refer to their improvement of the IRA technique of knee-capping by bullet members (or, indeed, non-members) they suspect of deviation or dangerous thoughts. The knee-capping by the UPAG is done with a Black & Decker electric drill in makeshift punishment centres, called Romper Rooms, off the Shankill Road in Belfast. Romper Rooms, that's a laugh!

Of course, if you've already lost your legs like the girl who has got a job in Dublin dress shop (she lost them on Bloody Friday in the Abercorn Restaurant bombing) you will present a difficulty to the Black & Decker men. But it's surmountable. The B & D is equally effective at drilling a hole in your head! If you are not vomiting at the kind of Ireland we've got for this Christian festival, give a Black & Decker to your friendly local Provo this Christmas. That will give him equal status, if that's the word, with his UPAG counterpart.

In all this, do not forget the active indifference — the refusal to know — of the vast majority of the people in the Republic. Just the same as the German people's indifference to the death camps of the "final solution" of the Jews. The idiom of hatred is the same in Limerick as in Lubeck, in Dublin as in Dresden.

The Rev. Vincent Kavanagh, a Limerick Redemptorist, says that Irish men and women are no longer prepared to work. Self-indulgent spendthrifts, he calls us. Granted that being a Redemptorist is a form of work (and there are some who wouldn't agree) I think his reverence owes an apology to the hundreds of Limerick men and women — at least — who've been forced out of their jobs in the economic blizzard of the last six months.

There may, of course, be an explanation for Father Kavanagh's untimely, illtempered outburst: could it be that he is one of the Redemptorists I've been reading about who are going round the Limerick pubs saving souls at the expense of their own sobriety? If so, they are not going to get support from Rome. Their activities savour too much of the work-priests of France who got so involved that they joined unions, led strikes for fair wages and in some cases, fell in love with girls they met on the shop floor. The Pope, largely through Cardinal Jean Danielou, the Jesuit, stopped those larrikins. (Pity that the Cardinal had to abandon his exigent moral line and let everyone down by being found dead in a prostitute's apartment. A high-class one, of course). Thesis and antithesis can never have been more brilliantly opposed.

I was glad that John Simpson, the BBC correspondent, said on RTE as he was leaving Dublin that he'd never met such a supine lot as the Irish consumer. They never query why prices are so much higher in Dublin or Cork or Limerick than in English towns and cities. Once you've allowed for the VAT bit the margin is ghastly. It is greed, greed and greed by the craw-thumping Irish shopkeeper. You are never likely to get any real action out of this or any alternative government. So what about a little direct action, pals?

Not knee-capping. Not the Black & Decker. A boycott with claws should bring the worst offenders to heel. Try spitting at

your avaricious grocer, "accidentally" upsetting the goods on his shelves, and especially, leaving him alone in his pew at St. Alphonsus's. Why not, indeed why not, prime Father Kavanagh with a few half-ones on his next visitation to your local and set him at the usurious shopkeeper. After all there is a precedent: what did Our Lord do to the moneymen who were defiling the temple? Get cracking, Father K!

I hope you are as relieved as I am that there is not to be an election for the Presidency. Though I'm personally delighted that a former colleague of mine on the Irish Press has got the job (we were both working "in the national interest" at the time, that is to say, for peanuts) I feel the country can manage without the luxury of a President in these hard times. Indeed, we almost did without one — he was called a Governor-General then — in de Valera's heyday.

After McNeill, Dev downgraded the job by appointing a genial old buffer, an Irish language nutter named Liam O Buachalla who was not allowed to stay in the Park, had to be content with a modest semi in Booterstown, and could not show up at any public function. O Buachalla never did a stroke of work, just like any Limerick Redemptorist, but collected his cheque on the dot every month. The old boy did get me suspended though because my editor heard I'd christened this G-G "The Hermit of Booterstown" for the newspapers of Lord Beaverbrook. Poor Frank Gallagher could not take a joke when it wasn't in the national (i.e. Dev's) interest. But Lord B. turned out to be grateful — he was my next employer — and there were cheers all round when I left the national interest alone. Safe in the hands of those who knew how to exploit it. If I'd played my cards right, I might have wound up in the Park revelling in truffles and chilled champagne!

Seriously, the Childers' panegyrics made me slightly ill. What's all this about what he did for the Health Service? Or what Corish is doing for that matter? There is not any Health Service you'd notice here. What else did Childers do? He was a mild-mannered man among a crowd of bosthoons and he knew enough French to introduce me to a girl from Flines les Raches, near Armentieres. Accomplishments, of a sort.

(In case you have an inquiring mind: (Later Mademoiselle from Armentieres whose father owned a shipping line rebuffed my proposal to marry into the line — to Tahiti — with a cold "tu n'est pas serieux" outside the Cathedral de St. Meurice in Lille. An occasion I shant' forget because a local ignored the notice "defense d'afficher, defense de pisser" while the luxe I craved was slipping from my grasp). That's the way the cookie crumbles. You play the black and the red turns up.

What shall I be thinking of this Christmas? Of the sad case of an itinerant woman which Heather Lalor, my tireless Labour Party branch secretary, is raising hell about. My helplessness ... except to salve my conscience with a handout. This woman lives in a tent with an invalid husband and eleven children and she's pregnant! Don't say anything about The Pill; she's allergic to it or something. Of course, there won't be any Christmas for her. And a neighbour whose aid I solicited said "There's lots more like her round here ..." There's something wrong with this country, Mr. President.

Then of course, there's the brighter side of Christmas — if you have the money. On a stroll through Grafton Street I was struck by two items for the conspicuous consumer: an 18ct. gold swizzle stick (excuse me, mates, that's to break up the bubbles in your whiskey and soda) and a sweet little contraption I last saw in a jet-set shop in the Via Vento, a silver spirit lamp and cradle to warm your brandy glass.

But let's end with the usual (sick) joke. In these days of inflation the wages of sin is the same.

A minor milestone

WITH this (December) edition the "Limerick Socialist" is three years old. In reaching 36 monthly issues the paper has passed a minor milestone in the history of political journalism in Limerick. In the period of the so-called "four glorious years" (1917-'21) a rash of political broadsheets appeared in the city. These included "The Bottom Dog" and "The Worker", two working class papers, and "The Factionist", "The Irish Republic" and "The Soldier Hunter", three nationalist publications.

"The Worker" and "The Soldier Hunter" were short-lived productions and folded quickly. "The Factionist", the best known local nationalist weekly, proved to be more resilient and lasted for 34 weeks. On Thursday, 20th September, 1917, in an article titled, "Good-Bye For The Present", the paper sounded its swan-song:

With this issue the Management of the "Factionist" have decided to suspend publication. Under present conditions, with the shortage of paper and the other difficulties of our position, we have come to the conclusion that development, on the lines we had intended, is impossible. Also when it is remembered that the national spirit of the country is now strong and healthy, the necessity for our existence is not so marked. We are still, however, convinced that a paper run on lines such as ours, mainly criticism, humorous, and sometimes sarcastic criticism of local affairs from a national standpoint is, under more favourable conditions, capable of much development, and when things settle we may (D.V.) have another try. There are several matters.. we shall have to leave over t'ill some future time, as we still intend to appear at intervals as occasion demands.

In finishing up we feel we have reason to congratulate ourselves and all those who have helped us in the production and disposal of the paper each week. To have appeared regularly for 34 weeks, and to close VOLUNTARILY, speaks well for the integrity of all concerned, especially in these days of Secret-service pimps, G.-men, Martial law and straw-hatted fortune-tellers. We also wish to thank our many many readers for the things, kind and otherwise, they said of us - very often in our unblushing presence - and we hope to meet all again at some future period.

Thus ended "The Factionist's" run. But before long the narrow nationalist philosophy propounded by the paper became the all-embracing political policy of all other surviving newspapers in Limerick.

"The Bottom Dog" was first published on 20th October, 1917 and continued until November, 1918. In this period 48 editions were printed.

Articles from the last available issue of "The Bottom Dog" are reprinted in this (December) edition of the "Limerick Socialist". The extracts bring the reprints from "The Bottom Dog" to an end. In our next (January) issue we hope to take up from where the "Dog" left off by publishing the first extract from an unpublished manuscript called "The Fourth Siege of Limerick". This work was written by P.J. Ryan, - Parnell Street, Limerick, who died at the City Home Hospital in June of this year. He was aged over 70 years.

In the manuscript Ryan casts an unsentimental and humorous eye on the Civil War in Limerick and its opposing combatants. The work also contains valuable descriptions of social conditions existing in the city during the period. It should serve as a useful antidote to the conventional and nationalistic histories.

We regret that owing to pressure of space the second part of "Education": Areply to Dr. Newman" has been held over to our January edition.

Presidential Burials

DURING all the fuss surrounding the death of President Erskine Childers in November, no writer or commentator recalled the delicate situation that arose for members of the Costello Coalition Government when the first President of the State, Dr. Douglas Hyde, died. Hyde, like Childers, a Protestant, had been a poet, Gaelic scholar and chief architect of the attempt to revive the Irish Language.

When Hyde died not a single member of the Government attended the burial service in St. Patrick's Cathedral because in the pre-Vatican II era attendance of a Catholic at a non-Roman Catholic service was considered a grave mortal sin, reserved for the absolution of a bishop,

Only two Catholics, the poet, Austin Clarke, and the French Ambassador, braved the fires of hell to pay a last tribute to Hyde. Outside the Cathedral railings the Taoiseach and the members of his Cabinet skulked in their Ministerial cars afraid to venture into the sinful grounds. After the funeral Austin Clarke wrote a satirical poem, "Burial of an Irish President", to commemorate the event:

*At the last bench
Two Catholics, the French
Ambassador and I, knelt down.
The vergers waited. Outside.
The hush of Dublin town,
Professors of cap and gown,
Costello, his Cabinet,
In Government cars, hiding
Around the corner, ready
Tall hat in hand, dreading
Our Father in English. Better
Not hear that 'which' for who
And risk eternal doom.*

The poet, Clarke, is now dead and in the ballyhoo that followed the death of Childers his poem was discreetly forgotten. But had he lived he would surely have smiled and perhaps written another poem were he to see the hero of Boland's Mills and other Catholic nationalist warriors of a similar vintage kneel reverently beneath the imperial flags of "Corunna, Juate Bras, Inkermann and Pretoria, their pride turning to rags".

Clarke would also have been surprised to see the scarlet - sashed Cardinal Conway, relegated for once to a back pew, amid the little old ladies of Dun Laoghaire and Malahide joining uneasily in the singing of "Abide With Me". And "beyond the desperate tomb of Swift" the television cameras "caught" Corish, the Minister for Health, having a private leer with his wife. Only for the poor of Clarke's poem "in top-back room and alley of the Coombe, crowding the dirty streets, upbraiding all our pat tricks" watching the "tricoloured and beflowered coffin of our President", did things remain the same.

A MORAL VICTORY

GLUN na Buidhe were debating "that walzes should be banned at Ceilidhte". Seamus O Cinneide led those in favour of the motion and S. Mac Alastair those against. The motion was passed by 13 votes to 12.

("Down Memory Lane", 30 Years Ago, "Limerick Chronicle", 24/11/74).

IN VIEW of the case being made for the beatification of Matt Talbot as the patron of Irish workers, his record as a worker and trade unionist is worthy of some study. Many of the older Dublin workers who knew Talbot seem to have dismissed him as a "bosses' man". The consensus of this opinion would accept Stephen Behan's description of Talbot: "He was a trade unionist when he had to be".

Mary Purcell in her biography, "Matt Talbot and his Times", records that Talbot took part in a strike at the Dublin Port and Dock's Board in 1900. She states that most of the workers involved went back to work but Talbot and three others refused to return when their demands were not met.

In his "Life of Matt Talbot", Sir Joseph Glynn describes how Talbot went through the lock-out and strikes of 1913:

How did these strikes affect him? In fact he went through it all quite serenely. He took the view that he was not competent to judge the matter in dispute, and, therefore, left the decision to the men as a whole.

Talbot did not attend any trade union meetings but when the lock-out took place he left his job with his fellow-workers. He refused to take part in demonstrations or the picketing of the timber yards. He accepted his share of the strike pay paid by his trade union, the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, to the locked-out workers.

A story related by Glynn helps to explain Talbot's attitude to unions and working conditions. In accordance with an agreement with the employer the workers would each receive two shillings bonus by unloading a cargo of timber within a certain time. All the workers except Talbot eagerly accepted the extra payment for their tough back-breaking work. When questioned by the foreman about his refusal to accept the bonus, Talbot requested that the money be set against the time spent waiting for lorries to arrive. The foreman however, forced Talbot to take the money and the reluctant labourer accepted it as a gift rather than as his right.

This, then, is the man who was described in 1972 by Stephen McGonagle, then president of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, as "an involved trade unionist, one of the very first and one who stands out as a beacon light to Irish workers to guide us on the tempestuous courses ahead".

A different description of Talbot was given by the American writer, Paul Blanshard, in his book, "The Irish and Catholic Power":

The priests ... tend to exalt above all other servants of humanity the apostle of Catholic ritual who spends endless hours in going through the forms of ecclesiastical contrition. Their latest national hero is the pathetic former drunkard Matt Talbot, who was regarded by many of his fellow-working men as mentally unbalanced. For twenty years the Dublin priests have been trying to make him into Ireland's first modern saint in order to use his memory and his relics against drinking — and against leftist tendencies in the labour movement. They are apparently about to succeed. The Sacred Congregation of Rites is now considering 1,400 pages of evidence submitted to it by the Irish hierarchy concerning the saintly qualities of Talbot, and if the evidence is accepted at face value he will presently be beatified ... there came a turning point in his life which is shrouded in mystery. Some of his associates believe that the transformation was due to shock, and they say that he woke up one morning after a long spree to find a prostitute dead in his bed. Whatever may be the truth of this report, he suddenly realised that he was approaching disintegration. There was a sudden about-face in his behaviour ... Although Matt Talbot lived during some of the most critical years of the Irish labour struggle, he made no contribution to the labour movement beyond the payment of union dues, and never attempted to take part in labour reforms .. 'There was packed into Matt Talbot,' says Father Dolan, 'everything that was best in Irish character.'

The question of Talbot's sanity frequently comes up for consideration and the attitude quoted by Blanshard is one commonly held by many Dublin workers. The explanation of

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| <h1>MATT TALBOT</h1> <p>PART FOUR</p> | <h1>SAINT OR SCAB?</h1> |
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the dead prostitute for Talbot's traumatic conversion is one less commonly held. Apart from its inclusion in "The Irish and Catholic Power", this belief has not been supported by any other written evidence.

Mary Purcell summed up Talbot's attitude to his fellow-workers in her biography:

Matt Talbot ... being unmarried and having through the ascetic life he had voluntarily chosen, reduced his wants to a minimum, he did not himself perhaps feel hardships as others did; and, if he did, his reaction to discomfort would probably be different from that of others.

Glynn, in his book, stated:

To sum up his views on these two questions of Labour and Politics. In Labour matters he stood by his fellows when their action was in accordance with the laws and teaching of the Catholic Church, which for him was the voice of God. In politics of any description he took no part or interest.

But neither Glynn nor Purcell could claim to be impartial writers. Glynn showed his bias when he wrote about the lock-out:

As is inevitable in times of such struggles, excesses were committed and weapons used which alienated sympathy from the workers in many cases. This was notably the case when it was proposed to send the children of the unemployed to England to be supported by the workers there. This proposal was as short-sighted as it was fatuous and raised a storm of protest amongst the workers themselves, with the result that it was not carried out ... The end came when the English Union withdrew their financial support from the Irish workers, so that with no alternative to starvation except submission, the men returned to work on the employers' terms.

Thus the part played by William Martin Murphy and the other Dublin employers in the crushing of the workers is conveniently glossed over. Mary Purcell's book is equally uncritical in its treatment of the employers and of Talbot himself.

And so the case for Talbot's beatification goes on. On July 31st this year an article in the "Evening Press" by Fr. Morgan Costelloe, "vice-posulator of the cause of Matt Talbot", stated:

.. it is a sobering thought that while Irish people seem at times to have forgotten that Matt Talbot is a candidate for canonisation, Pope Paul is keenly interested in his Cause. In 1971 he met a number of pilgrims from the Men's Sodality, Gardiner Street, in private audience. They petitioned His Holiness to canonise Matt, who was a former member of the Sodality. "It is about time he was canonised", Pope Paul told them. "I will do my best" ... Without a miracle even Pope Paul can do little towards his canonisation and a miracle only comes, as a rule, as a result of a crusade of prayer.

And to keep the Talbot pot boiling, some clothes, tools and religious items were rooted out of a box in a Redemptorist Convent in Dublin in August this year and this event was duly publicised in the press.

A controversy also surfaced in the I.T.G.W.U. magazine, "Liberty", in the last year about Talbot and his life.

And so the almost illiterate worker, who could barely read and write, awaits a miracle to bring about his canonisation. Paul Blanshard's comment about Talbot and the example of

KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY

ON one well known occasion during a Dail debate Donogh O'Malley frankly admitted that "all things being equal" he and the then Fianna Fail Government would give a vacant job or the contract to one of the party's own supporters. After a suitable display of simulated outrage, the Fine Gael and Labour deputies went on to criticise O'Malley's statement up and down the country. The impression was given that Fine Gael and Labour would not emulate Fianna Fail's policy in this matter and that things would be much different were the then opposition parties in power.

But now the boot is on the other foot (or feet). With the Coalition Government in power for nearly two years, Fine Gael and Labour have shown themselves to be just as adroit as Fianna Fail in "pulling" the jobs for their party pals. Already the patronage list piled up by the present Government shows signs of rivalling Fianna Fail's formidable record.

An example of a relatively small piece of political patronage was recently carried out in Limerick. The sub-post office at Quinlan Street, near The Crescent, was about to close because of the retirement from business of the people in possession of the premises. The news got out that the post office was "up for grabs" and before long the behind the scenes manoeuvring started.

A number of local people expressed interest in taking over the post office and re-opening it at some nearby premises. And some even put in a word with the "proper authorities" and hoped for the best. But while the moves were taking place a professional had entered the field. Steve Coughlan was already one jump ahead of the post office punters and had no

his life's work having been used to combat leftish tendencies in the labour movement is an accurate one.

The Talbot model-type worker served Irish Capitalism during its introverted period of protectionism. During this time the political awareness of workers remained at a low level while the employers' profits remained protected and intact. But with the coming of free trade and the link up of Irish capitalism with international industrial development, the Talbot image is now of little use to employers. A more sophisticated, better educated and skilled work force is now needed to meet the changed demands of modern industry.

At a time when the Catholic Church is shedding some of its long serving "saints" and when the stock of "miracles" has, apparently, dried up, the chances of Talbot's canonisation are by no means certain. And, judging from the long drawn out process involved in a canonisation case, by the time a decision is taken Talbot and his life-style will have become even more out-dated.

The key to an understanding of Talbot is to be found in the manner in which he switched his single-minded concentration from alcohol to religion. He replaced his love of drink with a blind, uncritical religious fervour and he displayed the same total dedication and energy in the pursuit of his new goal. The practice of his religion took on a narrow, extreme form of personal prayer, fasting, the scourging of his body with chains and daily attendance at church services. The "love thy neighbour" concept of Christianity found little or no expression in this practice and Talbot seems to have been oblivious of the plight of his fellow workers and their families.

Despite the posthumous attempts to turn Talbot into a champion of the working class, it is clear that his eccentric and masochistic life has done nothing to improve the economic lot of Irish workers. A study of his life and work evokes feelings of pity rather than reverence for his long useless years of selfish self-denial. As they say in the old Gaelic fairy-tales: "You won't ever see his likes around again". This is the only positive aspect of the whole Talbot syndrome.

(Concluded).

THE 'BATTLE' OF CLONTARF PLACE

intention of losing his advantage.

The scheme was all set up. Coughlan had a man and a premises all lined up and waiting. His son, Thady, helped by his wife, Kay, was about to enter a new business. And an adjacent building, lying suitably empty, was waiting round the corner in Clontarf Place. Since Paddy Carmody (Thady Coughlan's father-in-law) had his pub closed down in a court case three years ago for possessing poteen, the place had been idle. So Steve was about to kill two birds with one stone: the pub was to be re-opened as a post office with his son in charge.

In October, when all the strings had been pulled and all the lines cleared, Thady duly took over. Already employed as a plant foreman with his father's friend, the millionaire, Sean Hurley, Thady obviously believes in adding a second string to his bow. And the "Godfather", Steve, could be well pleased with his successful mission.

It is significant that none of the local deputies has raised the matter in the Dail. This silence contrasts with the lost controversial sub-post office given out in Limerick. On Thursday, 24th June, 1971, Gerry L'Estrange (Fine Gael, Longford - Westmeath) asked in the Dail about a number of letters sent to the then Taoiseach (Jack Lynch) alleging that Christy Tierney, of Rockbrae, Glenmore Avenue, Roxboro Road, Limerick, had paid the then Minister for Justice, Des O'Malley, £50 on the understanding that he (Tierney) would receive a sub-postmastership. Gerry L'Estrange asked for an inquiry into the affair and requested the Taoiseach to take some action about the matter. He also stated that Tierney alleged that when he asked to be appointed O'Malley told him that the subscription necessary would be one year's salary, £300.

Jack Lynch replied and admitted that Tierney had subscribed to the Fianna Fail party funds during the 1968 East Limerick by-election. He said that the sub-post office had been given to the most suitable applicant. After other deputies had joined in the debate, Steve Coughlan began to shout questions across the floor. A general uproar developed on the Government benches and the Ceann Comhairle had difficulty in establishing some order.

Coughlan stated he had a copy of a letter sent to Tierney by O'Malley. After the Ceann Comhairle pointed out that it was not in order to use quotations at question time, Coughlan, amid interruptions, read the following sentences from O'Malley's letter:

I have spoken at length to Paddy Lalor .. I feel certain that he will accede to my recommendation and that you will be appointed.

The debate came to an end with Coughlan pressing Lynch strongly for an inquiry.

It is certain that Coughlan will not press the present Taoiseach for an inquiry into the giving of the Clontarf Place sub-post office. And, just to keep things in the family, "Godfather" Coughlan went a step further by getting his son's father-in-law, Paddy Carmody, a stevedore at the Docks, nominated as one of the Minister's appointments to the newly-constituted Limerick Harbour Commissioners. As with the post office, it was probably another Donogh O'Malley case of "all things being equal". And it cannot be said that Coughlan is not a good "family man".

A BIRTHDAY "TRIBUTE"

IN his "Limerick Leader" column of December 7th An Magaire Sugach (the pen-name of Mannix Joyce) stated that his column had "now been running for all of 30 years". He reckoned that he had written a total of one and a half million words in his 1,560 columns in that period. He added that he had written "to promote interest in such things as Irish tradition, culture and language, local history, travel, folklore ...". But, judging from a letter in the same edition of the "Leader" as Mannix Joyce's 30 year's anniversary piece, some, at least, of the 1½ million words would appear to have been wasted. The letter reprinted below headed "Irish: Nonsensical Gibberish", was written by William J. O'Connell, Oakfield, Clonlara. It could only have come as an unexpected and an unwelcome birthday "tribute" for Mr. Joyce.

An Manguaire Sugach in his column, "Irish Gets The Boot" ("Limerick Leader", 23/11/74), gives an intimation which will be welcomed by the vast majority of the electorate who are thoroughly sick and tired of the Irish language ... For more than fifty years successive Irish governments have been playing the game of only pretending that Irish was the first official language when in actual truth nobody ever used it except when they had to do so: from T.D.'s conducting the business of parliament down to the most ordinary citizen cursing a recalcitrant donkey everything has been done in English.

"De-anglicising Ireland" is a phrase which belongs only to something like Aristophanes' comic drama, "The Birds". Mr. Sugach goes on to state that "the lesser men of to-day want an English-speaking Ireland". I could not agree more. As a diminutive Lilliputian with an outside Brobdignagian chip on my shoulder for the Irish language, I heartily endorse that and I wish to stand up and be counted in with the multitudinous midgets.

Ireland has never lacked screwball zealots and visionaries who spoke lightly on the impossible and whose stock-in-trade was phantasmagoria. The Protestant patriot, Dr. Douglas Hyde, was well paid for his fatuous grasping after the vanishing skirts of a pipe dream.

There are rumours of families who get bonuses for speaking Irish. Have I not read in the newspapers that schoolteachers who teach entirely "through the medium" get an augmented salary? Listen to the two prosperous looking, well dressed gentlemen who you hear ostentatiously speaking Irish on the street or in a supermarket and invariably they will turn out to be two school teachers or civil servants or similarly interested or comfortably emolumented people who have found patriotism profitable.

But for the remaining ninety-nine point nine per cent of us who are not getting any of this soft money the Irish language is only nonsensical gibberish. When

I was going to school more than 40 years ago half the school day was taken up with this useless drivel to the detriment of every other subject. "The lovely Irish", the teacher would say, almost as though he was actually savouring it on his palate like a vintage wine while no doubt pleasing thoughts flitted through his mind of the added corpulence it would bring his wallet. Pupils who were a bit slow on the uptake at learning Irish were scathingly referred to as "oul' thick boobies".

The seeming inter-minable monotonously insistent repetition with which Irish was taught generated a hatred of it and I, at any rate, found that it adversely sensitised my fibre and I became allergic to it. And now, a lifetime later, I have only to hear a couple of words of Irish over the air to become galvanised and rush to the radio while heaping anathema on whoever turned it on and breathing a benediction on the little knob for turning it off.

Is it any wonder that the Ulster Protestants are apprehensive about joining us in a United Ireland when they can see over the Border this flagrant negation of democracy in which school children are deprived of a proper education ... People instinctively resist compulsion. Conversely if they want to achieve something which they are interested in they will surmount difficulties ...

"How", Mr. Sugach enquires, "does the State propose to ensure that in ten, twenty or thirty years hence there will be Civil Servants who will be capable of transacting business in Irish with Irish speakers?" Transacting business in Irish is without doubt the preparation of Government forms, all of which are now printed bilingually. How much is this caper costing the taxpayer?

Printing all the forms bilingually in order to accommodate a small number of people all of whom are well able to complete the filling in of them in English - Surely, the thousands, if it stops at that, which this superfluous printing is costing, could, if spared, amount to a substantial reduction in taxation.

Mr. Sugach should cast out this worry and set his mind at rest. Even if the Government were to stop printing the Irish part of these forms tomorrow - there would still be enough of them already printed and lying around to do the people who insist on them until the year 3000 A.D.

FOR THE ATTENTION OF ALDERMAN M. LIPPER

IT used be said of Irish politicians that they were never confirmed in their role until they had got a belt of a bishop's crozier. It becomes a little disconcerting then to find at this stage of the day that politicians and Bishops are jostling for elbow room in the same pulpit.

(Michael Mills, "Irish Press", 4/12/74).

SIGN THE PROVO INSURANCE POLICY

GERALDINE Countess of Dunraven has signed a petition calling for an end to internment in the North, it was disclosed this week by Mr. Dan Greaney, P.R.O. of the Limerick End Internment Campaign.

("Limerick Leader", 30/11/74).

THE CRUMBS OF OFFICE

ONE good thing has emerged from the National Coalition: whenever they sit in opposition again they will not be able to trot out the old cry of jobs for the boys. We must have a P.C. in every parish and two in some. When one hears of the appointment of a new P.C., one is inclined to ask to which party does he give his allegiance; no doubt but he is a party hack of either Fianna Fail, Fine Gael or, lately, Labour. These are only the crumbs to show recognition for party work done; the plums are kept for the hierarchy ...

(Patrick Clancy, "Limerick Leader", 23/11/74).

'The Parish Pump'

PART TWO

Of the first five editions of "The Parish Pump" the third issue is far and away the best. Most of the articles are interesting and well-researched and the writing is fresh and lively. This edition also has a good "mix", with a letter and two poems thrown in for good measure.

The letter written by Mary O'Gorman, the Diocesan Social Service Centre's social worker responsible for the St. Mary's area, seeks to stir readers into action to put pressure on the Limerick Corporation to provide decent living accommodation for the eight old women who reside at the Widows' Alms Houses:

I wonder if anyone passing down Nicholas Street recently has looked in to the Widows' Alms Houses and wondered what life is like for the women who live there? Despite years of voluntary work on the buildings ... they are nevertheless in a sorry state ... Because of the inadequate damp-proof courses, the houses become very damp in the winter and the only source of heat for most of the eight old ladies who live there is the very inadequate smoky fireplaces ... all the voluntary work cannot be allowed to obscure the real neglect of the Corporation to assume its responsibilities in regard to the Almshouses .. When are the people of St. Mary's going to assume their responsibilities and agitate for better living conditions for the senior citizens of the Parish?

On page 4 the magazine's teenage editor, Des Fitzgerald, takes a cold look at one aspect of our class-ridden health services. In a sharp sardonic piece titled, "A Day in the Life of a Medical Card Holder", he writes:

The doctor did us all a big favour by arriving only one hour late. He did not bother to explain - why should he? Then, when he was quite ready, he signalled to the nurse that he would deign to see the sick plebs. It was a long wait. For some, however, it was only a matter of coming in off the street and walking immediately into the doctor's loving care. I wondered at this. Later I learned that people without medical cards had that privilege while those with medical cards were second-class patients. Two long cold, boring hours later my turn had come. I was actually going to see the doctor. Boy, was I thrilled; I really felt privileged. Even if his manner was arrogant and insulting to anyone's intelligence.

I have compared notes with many other people regarding the services rendered by Barrington's Hospital and the consensus of opinion is that something must be done about the whole stupid situation. Doctors and nurses have representation to remedy the ills of the health service - why don't they use it? Most, if not all, hospitals and clinics, etc., in Limerick city are basically degrading. But what is happening is terribly wrong. I think people should demand what is their right and accept nothing less.

The centre pages are devoted to the ordination of Dr. Newman as Catholic Bishop of Limerick. On page 6, in an article headed, "Message from the Bishop of Limerick to the people of St. Mary's Parish", the new bishop describes the effect on him of the journey from St. John's Cathedral to the beano at St. Munchin's College:

The sons of the parish on the sidewalks, the little knots of them here and there, the large groups in front of the Church and elsewhere, the people in the cars all along the rainy road, people shaking my hand, kissing my ring, asking the blessing of God on me as much as hearing me ask it on them, holding up their children for a blessing, their faces aglow with joy - one and all made plain to me how much they understood the meaning of receiving their new Bishop. To me, who had for so long been behind academic walls, this was a special experience ... I came to realise even more than before how quite unworthy I was to be chosen as the spiritual father of so magnificent a people and frightening too in that my realisation also increased of the extent of my responsibility towards them .. In the Cathedral, after my ordination, I made a solemn promise to work unreservedly for the spiritual and, in so far as

is proper to my station, the temporal welfare of the people of Limerick. I repeat that promise again here to you the people of St. Mary's.

It is not known how much the bishop has exercised his new "responsibility", or how much "unreserved work". Dr. Newman has carried out for the temporal welfare of the people of Limerick in the five months since his ordination. But, judging from the number of social ills documented by "The Parish Pump" in its brief existence, Dr. Newman should not be short of temporal work - "in so far as is proper to his station" - for the "magnificent people" of St. Mary's, without having to go further afield.

Many magazines provide a "social and personal column". "The Parish Pump" has not yet included such a feature, but in an article titled, "The Ceremony", Martin O'Connor added a social/religious tailpiece to the bishop's message:

St. John's Cathedral was packed to capacity for the ordination of Jeremiah Newman to the episcopate ... Those who were fortunate enough to procure invitations were in the Cathedral an hour before the actual ceremony started ... Outside the Cathedral the bishop was greeted by hundreds of well-wishers who were waiting to receive his blessing ... and kiss his ring ... It would be grossly unfair not to mention St. Mary's Prize Band for their playing on the occasion. The reception was on par with the ceremony. Every one of the estimated 1,100 guests accosting him and wishing him well. The Savoy's catering was magnificent. The ceremony, reception and hero-like welcome was befitting the man who has given his life to the community.

Martin O'Connor did not explain how the new bishop, who has spent most of his life out of Limerick "behind academic walls", "has given his life to the community". Nor did he list the percentage of workers from the St. Mary's area who hob-nobbed with the privileged and wealthy guests at the reception.

A notable landmark on the bishop's route to Corbally is the Ark Tavern. This Dom Dineen-owned pub is featured in an article titled, "A Dog's Life", in the page facing the conclusion of the bishop's piece. The contrast is, therefore, immediately evident. Here a different picture is presented of the exercise of wining and dining. The pub management come under the hammer as the teenage writer gives a lively description of pub life as seen through the eyes of a boy-waiter:

It certainly is a dog's life for the many trainee-barmen and waiters at present working in the public-houses in and around our parish. The waiters mainly provide us with this whine of ours. When I speak of waiters I should point out that they are not fully-grown members of the human race, indeed, many of them would find it very difficult to obtain a driving licence, neither are they bunny-girls, just boys in their early teens. Amid the smoke, laughter and, of course, drink (and it isn't spring water) the waiter works diligently trying to keep a smile on his face. This in itself is a difficult task when you are not happy. These young boys have every reason to be unhappy because for their four hours' work (8 p.m. to 12 p.m.) per night they are paid approximately 60p. Talk about Ebenezer Scrooge! And, of course, not one of these waiters stamp an insurance card, which, incidentally, costs £1.42. (Even Houdini couldn't manifest a trick like that!)

I was told by my parents, "Don't always complain", so now I start praising. The management of a newly-built pub in the Corbally area have proven themselves free from creating favouritism among the waiters. They esteem the title of head-waiter on one poor chap, which, as one can guess, carries high responsibility, but they pay him the same miserly sum as the others. The parents of these children must shoulder the blame for allowing their children to work under such luxurious conditions. As any M.D. will tell you, working until midnight (that means getting to bed by one o'clock) is beneficial to one's health. Take it from me, "it's a dog's life"!

The writer in this piece is clearly not in the traditional "Parish" mould. With these insights he might yet go on to write a clear-eyed social history of St. Mary's, telling the story of the pig-buyers, the Abbey fishermen, the sand-men, the sportsmen, the singers and the whole teeming sub-culture of Limerick life on the old King's Island. (To be continued).

ECHOES FROM

- THE -

BOTTOM DOG

"We must look at life in all its aspects from the point of view of the
"Bottom Dog" - the oppressed - be it nation, class, or sex."

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The Little Dog is daily dotting the doings of the Dear-Drink Brotherhood and Doped-Draught-Stout Sisterhoods in this city. Still, the Pup is not particularly sorry for Bung, Barrel, Duck-Him-Joe, or his victims, the poor thirsty souls - spongy sinners, who, on the late Saturday night or early Sunday morning, gladly and gleefully fork out 15 pence for a pint of Ping-Pong, that evil compound of Hops, Hair Oil, Ale Slops, and Lemonade Gas.

SNAP APPLE NIGHT (Conundrums Cracked by the Canine "Quare Wans".)

1. - Which is mightier, the pencil or "The Scissors-and-Paste-pot" on the boil at the Offices of the poor-mouthing "Munster News"? Where are the two recently dismissed Reporters rusticating? Are their names in Bourke's Peerage? Liberty of the ex-Press!

2. - Who is the diamond-dyed Glazier discovered "breaking through" the glass at the back of the derelict Technical School? Was he endeavouring to "read between the lines", or was it 3-star "Hennessy"? Enquire within of the Eye-Witness.

3. - Will there be bags of game towards the middle of the month re the General Election? This way to the poll, boys. Mark your X anywhere you like or where you fancy - Sinn Fein, Labourite, Nationalist, Nothing-at-all-ite, or Talkative Mrs. Duckey-ite, or Lizzie Goose-Grace, M.P. Are we downhearted at the prospect? No! Are we far from London, Pilot? Were we rocked in the cradle of the deep recently?

4. - Why are some City Loaf-ers so fond of the "Sack" system? Whatever you do, don't consult Master of the Rolls Russell. He might rowl over your empty bread-basket with his motor-car.

5. - Who is the Puffing Billy of a bloated official always putting down nought and "carrying on" at the Sunday Church collections, but certain to come out right on top when the list is placarded?

6. - Is Limerick so defunct in statesmanship, brains and ability, and Good Samaritanship, that no commanding personality has come forward to render first aid, to salve and to solve local ruptures and difficulties? Naire even one.

7. - What part of the type-written, tearful vote of sympathy is solid, sincere sorrow? Would a Mass and "The Lord have mercy" be infinitely better? For the sake of the Poor Souls departed, drop off the "and that we now adjourn, etc". Tommy rot.

8. - Which is most necessary to-day, The Catholic Truth Society or "A Catholic Tell the Truth Society"? "Ah, now, don't be talkin'," "Ax me another wan!"

9. - A "Birds in the Bush" problem. How many Mudboro' Mayors died from the cold shoulder or frost-bitten feet from not having feathered their nests while stuck to their seats on the Lynchsack?

20. - Who are the Brutal Bloodless Butchers still selling "God's Own" at 1s. 10d. per lb. wholesale "off the round" - off o' Food Forest's Round or Dr. McGrath's, for that matter?

11. - When is a Limerick Jarvey neither a Jarvey nor a Jehu, but an absolute out-and-out Jew? When he charges exactly two and a half times the legal fare to a raw-robin of a college boy for a ride of four hundred yards. Hould that fellow? Don't lave it to his honour. Hup-off!

12. - Has the Shawn-na-Skoobian right of the Mayor to a sample of shipment ceased since firing was cargoed to town per the trainful? Aye, Crane? Every ship that sailed up the Shannon had to shell out a ton not so long ago. There was also another very ancient custom. The Mayor for the time being put this hand in the public purse - his pocket - and gave a generous "spread" from his salary. Now for you. Is that hint enough?

THE LIMERICK NIGHT POLICE! (Not to be Sung in Publichouses).

The ancient corps and hoary - allow me to remark,
Does deeds of "derring" glory, but does them in the dark,
Can boast a few Flat-Runners and Steeplechasers four,
If anyone could wake them from the County Club hall-door.

Some constables wear whiskers, and one - Jim Barry's hat,
None suffer from insomnia - you bet your boots on that,
And though weighed down with helmet, top-coat, and
rheumatiz",

They do despite these trifles, faix, for Garryowen, good "biz".

Don't talk of Front Line Trenches. The Limerick Barrow Hall!
That Gaseous Zone and foremen - The Barrier Boys near wall,
When, "docked" for "duckin" duty, the "stoutest" heart
might cease,

A few walk out next door, begobs, in Limerick's Night Police.

Perhaps some drunken stranger should chance to cross his
beat,

To arms! our brave defender. "To arms?" Oh, no - to feet!

He knows how to surrender, but "Fog-a-boll-a"? No!

His heart disease is dangerous and his corns a holy show.

A stray-way mole or mud-cart he'll wallop to the "pound",

No sleep for that locality while whacks and kicks resound,

'Tis here he lays on varnish and paints his masterpiece,

Joe Lynch's Irish heirlooms, The Limerick Night Police.

When playboys, young and older, take a turn called "on the
loose",

Our Nervous Night Protector is subject to abuse,

"-Oh, kick and bate me, gentlemen - my pockets? as you
please!"

Not often they are empty with The Limerick Night Police.

Suppose ye started sooner - say, six o'clock - your rounds,

And sorted out the spooners, Good Conduct out of bounds,

The Fleet-Foot Firemen's sprinkler, hand-cart, and rowl of
hose,

Might aize the situation - then" they daren't show their
nose"!

Yes, Limerick, you are beautiful, and Garryowen you're blest,

With Corporators dutiful, high rates, and all the rest,

Take care! Some day the Shannon - a word from Dan
McNeice,

Might clear ye to Ballycannon on top of yeer Night Police.